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Calomel in Chronic Rheumatism

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Chapman

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The use of Calomel in Chronic Rheumatism

Among the many erroneous doctrines entertained in the infancy of medicine with regard to the theory and treatment of diseases, there were none founded on more false principles than those with regard to Rheumatism. For a long time there was no distinction made between Gout and Rheumatism. All diseases of the joints were distinguished by the name of arthritis whether the pain arose from a rheumatic inflammation or from what is now called Gout. Afterwards physicians considered all pains in the joints that were not plainly Gout as the effect of a rheum or catarrh. This change of theory instead ~~of instead~~ of improving their practice had the contrary effect for all catarrhous humors were supposed to be of a cold nature and bleeding was forbid; and the cure of acute rheumatism as well as gout was attempted without bleeding. To Battallus may be ascribed the honor

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of dissipating this idle theory and distinguishing the inflammatory state of these diseases from the chronic, and recommends bleeding in the acute state of both. This practice has been followed by the ablest writers of every succeeding age - Cullen defines Rheumatism to be "Morbus ab externa et plerumque evidente causa; pyrexia, dolor circa articulos, musculorum tractum sequens; genua et seleques magnes, potius quam pedum vel manum, articulos infestans, calor externa auctus. Rheumatism is classed among the Pleugmasiæ, although it is characterised by a peculiar action and a distinct termination. Very seldom if ever terminating in suppuration - Rheumatism is divided into species the acute and chronic or according to Dr Chapman more properly the Sonic and Atonic. Most practitioners concur in considering them not as distinct diseases, but as different stages of the same disease. It is homen of no practical importance as acute rheumatism is attended with fever and

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chronic is not. As the treatment of the two species of the disease is very different, the proper limits should be carefully marked. When the pains are still ready to shift their place; when they are especially severe in the night time, when at the same time they are attended with some degree of pyrexia and with some swelling and especially with some redness of the joints; the disease is ~~still~~ to be considered as still partaking of the nature of acute rheumatism. But when there is no degree of pyrexia remaining, when the pained joints are without redness; when they are cold and stiff; when they cannot be easily be made to sweat; or while a free and warm sweat is brought on the rest of the body, it is only clammy and cold on the pained joints; and when especially the pains of these joints are increased by cold and relieved by heat applied to them; the case is to be considered as that of purely chronic rheumatism*. Rheumatism is much allied to Gout and cannot always be discriminated.

*Cullen

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from it - Rheumatism has an exciting cause as cold, it has no preceding cause as Gout has - Gout affects the smaller joints, Rheumatism the larger - Rheumatism is not characterised by that bright inflammatory affection which usualy attends Gout - Both remit - but Gout is regular in its exacerbation, Rheumatism is not - Gout proceeds from and is accompanied with a disease of the stomach, Rheumatism seldom if ever is - No disease is more varied in its attack than Rheumatism - Most commonly it affects the joints of the extremities - When the hips are its seat it is called Sciatica when it attacks the back or loins it is called Lumbago. The skin is also sometimes subject to it - It has been considered a centrifugal disease, from which quality the distinction has been drawn between it and arthritic affections - Rheumatism however occasionaly attacks some of the viscera; most frequently the alimentary canal or liver, and sometimes even the heart itself - The hereditary

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~~[illegible]~~ of this disease is not yet well established in-
deed even by some entire in dencies. The advoca-
tes in favour of its not being hereditary assert
that if exposed to its exciting cause most persons
[illegible] affected with the disease [illegible] the case,
but they cannot deny that some of them will be
affected sooner and more severely than others
[illegible] because they are of a weaker constitu-
tion; it will be found that the [illegible]
as the weak suffer from [illegible]
[illegible] than [illegible] considering the
disease as hereditary. By supposing that they are
constitutionally predisposed to it and offsp. in an
[illegible] peculiarly susceptible of the
morbid action in which the disease consists.
[illegible] hereditary, and
affects those children who resemble their parents
in the form of their [illegible]
[illegible] affected [illegible] by those children whose
form and face resemble the parents who have

[illegible] these diseases, are all owing to the same hereditary diseases of the blood. Rheumatism prevails in some families more than others and it attacks [illegible] indiscriminately [illegible] and resembles their parents [illegible] these hereditary [illegible] [illegible] against its not being [illegible] [illegible] Rheumatism [illegible] so greatly that [illegible] one [illegible] [illegible] there hereditary that cannot with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to Rheumatism.

I have shown the difference between acute and chronic rheumatism, and the manner of discriminating the [illegible] of Rheumatism, also the [illegible] nature of rheumatism [illegible] to consider more minutely the effects of the [illegible] [illegible] use of Calomel in [illegible] Rheumatism. [illegible] [illegible] rheumatism [illegible] in [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] such [illegible]

presentem, aut tibi pleno minuse fugaces, calor
lectis vel alia externa irritatio antes debiles sega
de facile et safe ipsum te fugesentes - pyrexia nulla,
tum in pleuroque nullus. The cause of purely
chronic rheumatism is supposed to be a debili
ty of the parts affected accompanied with some
inflammation; and with a rigidity and con
traction of the muscular fibres. Hence our prin
cipal aim must be to restore the activity of the
vital principle in the part affected, to promo
te resorption of the effused fluids about the joints,
to remove the rigidity of the muscular fibres, and
generally produce a more active in them. The
remedies formerly recommended for the cure
of this disease were very many and generally
inefficient, always stimulating them action, and al
most as troublesome to the patient as the dise
ase itself. Almost all the heating & stimula
ting articles of the Materia Medica have
been used in the despondent times. Vinegar, the

volatile alkaline salts, and all those substances which contain essential oils & resins have been the principle remedies. Under this manner of treatment, the disease was considered as very difficult to cure and even by some as one of the opprobia medicorum. Pringle considered it as a disease which was but rarely cured & and when any relief was obtained it was by the use of mercury. He denied that a salivation will cure chronic rheumatism, but recommends repeated doses of calomel to be given at night and purged off the next morning. But his assertions are founded on false principles for calomel will not cure chronic rheumatism in any other way than by creating its own specific action on the system. Chronic rheumatism being a disease of debility it is seldom necessary to purge in it. If the disease is ever cured by a scarcher relaxing, it is not merely by the evacuation of acrid matter, but stimulation

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of the disease from the joints to the intestines
The correct plan of treatment in this disease by
the use of Calomel may with great justness be as
cribed to Fothergill. In his work we find a case
of Chronic rheumatism successfully treated
in this manner he says "when all the common
remedies had been applied, such as the antiphlogistics,
fomentations the volatile alkaline salts & anodynes
by an able physician and the patient was
under the necessity of taking large doses of opium
to relieve his pains he was cured by the use of Calomel
He continues "not finding any reason to suspect
either an internal abscess or a tendency to one
but that the seat of the pain was in the tendi
nous parts about the joints and deep seated" dire
ted calomel to be taken. As soon as the Calomel
had produced its effect on the system the pains
were abated and in a few weeks by continuing
the practice and by some gentle exercise he
was restored to his usual health. Had he been

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then states. "that he has seldom met with a case of genuine chronic rheumatism that has not yielded to this mode of treatment — Such testimony in favour of this mode of treating this disease from a Physician who has always ranked high among medical men, both as a man of liberal talents and of unquestionable veracity is no small recommendation in favour of it. Although the correct and easy plan of cure had been pointed out still it was only partially followed. It may be inferred from this that this practice was not so successfull with other physicians But such was not the case, be found in almost every practice of medicine calomel recommended. This disease set at our dominions in which all other cases, since — instead of it we have different medicines yet can have very little effect on the disease so this may be attributed the difficulties which we experience in curing this disease during the last six

I had an opportunity of seeing this practice pursued to a considerable extent at the Hospital [illegible] — There were a great many cases of very severe chronic rheumatism accompanied with great effusions around the joints. All were treated by the use of [illegible] with [illegible] and the [illegible] and all were [illegible]. Dr [illegible] that there was not one instance in [illegible] there is no medicine in the Materia Medica [illegible] than calomel [illegible] to the relief of [illegible] diseases in which [illegible] [illegible] had long been known. [illegible] the removal of [illegible] with the [illegible] in these diseases

and their analogy to the other chronic affections of the system. At length use of calomel in chronic rheumatism. Their existence was raised and they had the satisfaction of seeing another instance of the efficacy of this valuable remedy.

In addition, I use calomel in chronic rheumatism as being indeed the only remedy on which complete reliance should be placed. I am justified in so by the thorough nature of the disease. It is a disease of the nature affecting, located in the ligaments and membranes of the joints, and accompanied sometimes with an enlargement of the extremities of the bones. It requires the most powerful measures to produce a change in the action of the parts affected. There is generally some inflammation and often very high pulse considerable excited. In fact the membranes and ligaments of the joints are so inflamed

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that it requires local depletion to a considerable extent – In this case it is out of the question to administer those medicines which are generally recommended in this disease viz tartar emetics, digitalis & that increase the tenseness of the pulse, and which would only increase the disease. Although the action of Calomel on the system is stimulating, yet still that action has no way resembles that produced by other medicines. It possesses a specific action of its own which it imprises on the system. It overcomes the disease action in the system by imposing a new action which constitutes a disease and which is more powerful than that disease had before existed in the system. It is well established that no two diseases can exist at the same part of the system at the same time. We administer Calomel in this disease on this principle. The action which it produces on the system is so much

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stronger than the disease itself, that it proceeds to relinquish the hold it had on the system and in this manner cures the patient.-

The remedies recommended for the cure of Rheumatism may be divided into general and local. In general may be comprised in the two Calomel & Opium. The local Flannel bandages.-

The calomel should be administered in doses sufficient to produce a gentle ptyalism, continued for a considerable time. When we wish to have calomel produce its greatest effect on the system we ought to administer the medicine in very small doses increasing it gradually and continue it for a considerable time. While we are administering the calomel it will be proper to give small doses of Opium to relieve the pain which generally accompanies its exhibition, and prevent the calomel from purging. The patient should wear

flannel next his skin; and if he be free from fever take during fine weather as much exercise as he can bear, even so as to produce perspiration, care being taken that he does not take cold. The great efficacy of the flannel roller in this disease renders it indeed a powerful auxiliary in obtaining a radical cure. The credit of first using this remedy is undoubtedly due to the present distinguished professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine. It has also been claimed by Dr Balfour in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal but very improperly. I can not help mentioning here the illiberality of the Physicians of the Continent. They arrogate all the improvements in medicine made in the American practitioners to themselves. Instances are not wanting of their claiming many important improvements in medicine made by the present able and eminent Professors in our University.

The affected parts should be bandaged with flannell rollers which should be applied equable & tightly. It supports the muscles of the part so as to prevent in them the sensation of fatigue, invigorates the parts assists the circulation and promotes perspiration. It produces in them a strong impression which produces a new action, which overcomes the morbid association in which the disease consists. Indeed the power of this remedy is so great, that I have known it remove the complaint when of a mild nature without the use of any other remedy. The diet should be nutritive but not too heating. Fermentaceous liquors should be used very sparingly. If these remedies fail and if the constitution be weakened change of climate or in some cases change of occupation may effect a cure. In syphilitic rheumatism calomel is now generally used and with great success. In rheumatism from

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mends very highly the Juniperus Sabina in this complaint - but not being able to procure it in this country I could not give it a trial in this complaint - But recommended on the high authority of Dr Chapman and sanctioned by his experience, there can not be a doubt but it is a valuable remedy. But it appears to me that fever & Calomel are suited to different degrees of this complaint. When there is great inaction in the system with a considerable degree of coldness and deficiency of action on the surface of the body then such a powerful stimulus as the fever mixture might be used with great success - But when the system possesses a tolerable vigor, when the pulse is strong and when the vessels of the surface continue their usual action, then Calomel will be the proper remedy - Thus we may rank them both as valuable remedies in this disease - by pursuing the practice here indicated

vocated in this disease it will be found to be as easily removed as most diseases to which the human system is liable –

Asclepias Syriaca

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